

VZCZCXRO0874
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHAR #2674 3101623
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 061623Z NOV 06
FM AMEMBASSY ACCRA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2905
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS ACCRA 002674

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PGOV](#) [GH](#)

SUBJECT: AMBASSADOR MEETS WITH HEAD OF NEW DEMOCRATIC
FREEDOM PARTY

REF: ACCRA 02250

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Obed Asamoah engaged Ambassador in a robust discussion on economic development, his vision for the new political party he founded, health, and education. Asamoah shared our concerns over the escalating war of words between President Kufuor and former head of state Rawlings, asserting that Ghana's two largest political parties seemed headed toward a collision course. Calm and cerebral, Asamoah provides some gravitas to the nascent Democratic Freedom Party (DFP), though it remains to be seen whether the DFP will grow large enough to become a significant third force in the 2008 national elections. End Summary.

12. (SBU) Ambassador Pamela Bridgewater on November 2 met with Dr. Obed Asamoah, former Fonmin and founding member of the new Democratic Freedom Party (DFP), at the latter's request. Asamoah was concerned that the two largest parties, the ruling National Patriotic Party (NPP) and the opposition National Democratic Congress (NDC), were on a collision course and the next national elections in 2008 would prove to be a "troublesome occasion." Because so many politicians were on "ego trips" or promoting their own agendas, what Ghana really needed was a third political force that would enhance democracy, said Asamoah. He argued that with a serious third party in the race, the eventual winner of the 2008 elections would have to negotiate with at least one other party, thus leading to greater stability.

13. (U) Asamoah described his priorities as alleviating poverty and boosting agricultural production. "Why could India and China achieve self-sufficiency in food but not Ghana?", Asamoah asked. He thought Ghana would do well to focus on self-sustaining activities such as tourism and food processing, rather than relying on handouts. Asamoah also called for lower taxes, particularly on businesses, to encourage private sector growth. Finally, he opined that Ghana should concentrate on training more technicians and fewer theoreticians.

14. (U) Ambassador noted Ghana's growth potential and its reservoir of talent, much of which migrates overseas. She pointed out a recent press article concerning higher infant mortality rates, cautioning that Ghana would need a healthy populace if it were to continue to move forward. Ambassador added that Ghana enjoyed tremendous good will among the international community and hoped that politicians would emphasize what was best for the country, rather than fixating on personalities.

15. (SBU) Asamoah said he was not planning on running for president two years' hence, but instead wanted to devote his time to building up a third party that would offer Ghanaians a viable alternative to the NPP and NDC. Decrying rampant corruption, Asamoah described some GOG anti-corruption institutions as "toothless," but said that the Serious Fraud Office, established while the NDC was in power, was strong.

As for the future of the fledgling DFP, Asamoah said the party was drawing in lots of former NPP and NDC supporters, a considerable number of people exiting the quixotic Convention People's Party (CPP), and those who were previously unaffiliated with any political party.

16. (SBU) Asked about the escalating rhetoric between President Kufuor and former President Rawlings, Asamoah concurred that the war of words had become nastier. While Rawlings was already noted for being unrestrained and even paranoid in seeing enemies everywhere, President Kufuor seemed to be "losing his cool." The long-term implications, he opined, were that the two largest parties will end up in conflict.

17. (SBU) Ambassador concluded the meeting by saying she was troubled by the downward trend away from civility. She had seen situations where compatriots had become their own worst enemies and did not want that to happen in Ghana. Ambassador added that true economic development would surely lead to a more stable, democratic environment in Ghana and wished Asamoah success in making Ghana a better country.

18. (SBU) Comment: Asamoah sounded more right-of-center than he did during our last meeting with him (reftel), when he advocated a large state role in the economy. He is a serious intellectual who is well respected. Although others have dismissed the DFP's electoral prospects, the party could surprise observers and play a pivotal role in the elections of 2008 if it manages to expand beyond a cadre of intellectuals and attract significant popular support. End Comment.

BRIDGEWATER